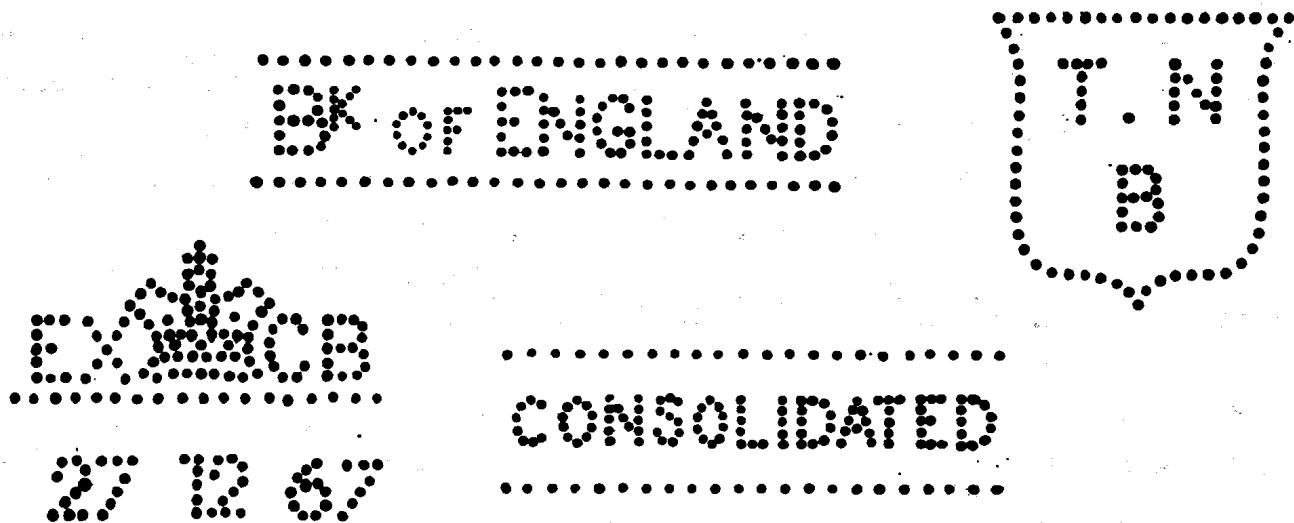


It is well documented that on 13th March, 1868, Joseph Sloper was given official permission to perforate postage stamps with initials in an attempt to protect the stamps from theft and subsequent sale or re-use. Prior to this, his perforating business had centred around the manufacture of presses and dies for marking cheques, accounts, and railway tickets. Although his perforating patent was granted on 1st September 1858, the earliest surviving record of any of his presses (No. 75) is dated May 1862 and is for a Lever "Amount" Press with brass fittings.

Typical examples from the ten-year period prior to use on postage stamps are illustrated below.

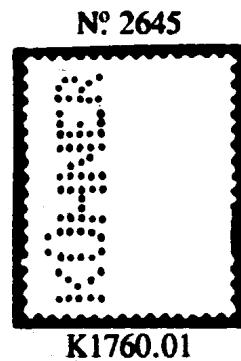
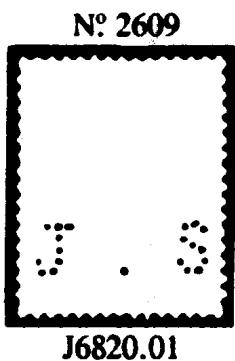
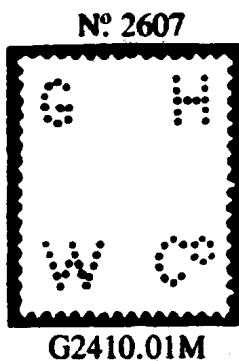


Joseph Sloper's involvement with perforating postage stamps took on two distinct approaches:

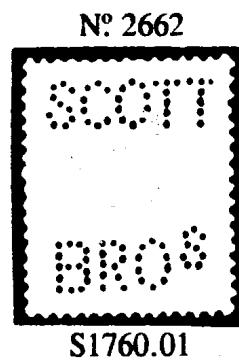
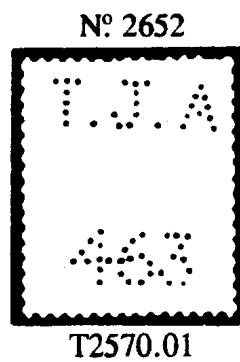
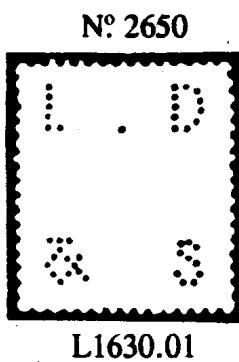
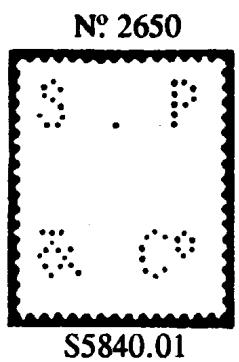
- (1) The manufacture of perforating dies held at his works to perforate, for a fee, stamps on behalf of customers.
- (2) The manufacture of presses and perforating dies purchased by customers to perforate their own stock.

Unfortunately, no early records survive which relate to the first category although many are now known from dies found on the Line Engraved stamps of Queen Victoria. On the other hand, the second category is well documented from the point of view of ordering and manufacture, even down to who made the press and die, and on occasions what gauge of wire was used, but sadly not the names of any of the customers who actually ordered them.

In Bulletin No. 275 I reported on the earliest of these machines, (i.e. a press fitted with a perforating die made specifically for sale to customers). The records show that Press No. 2607 (the last of a batch of five made by H Sloper for stock) was fitted with a two headed die (1x2) with the initials 'GH/WC^o'. The order was made on 28th March, 1868, and an impression taken of the finished die on 3rd April. We catalogue this die as G2410.01M. The only other machine made during that year specifically for a customer to perforate his own postage stamps was one with the initials 'J.S¹'. This was ordered on 13th May, 1868, and fitted to machine N? 2609. Although no impression appears to have been taken of the finished die, we can be fairly certain it was J6820.01.

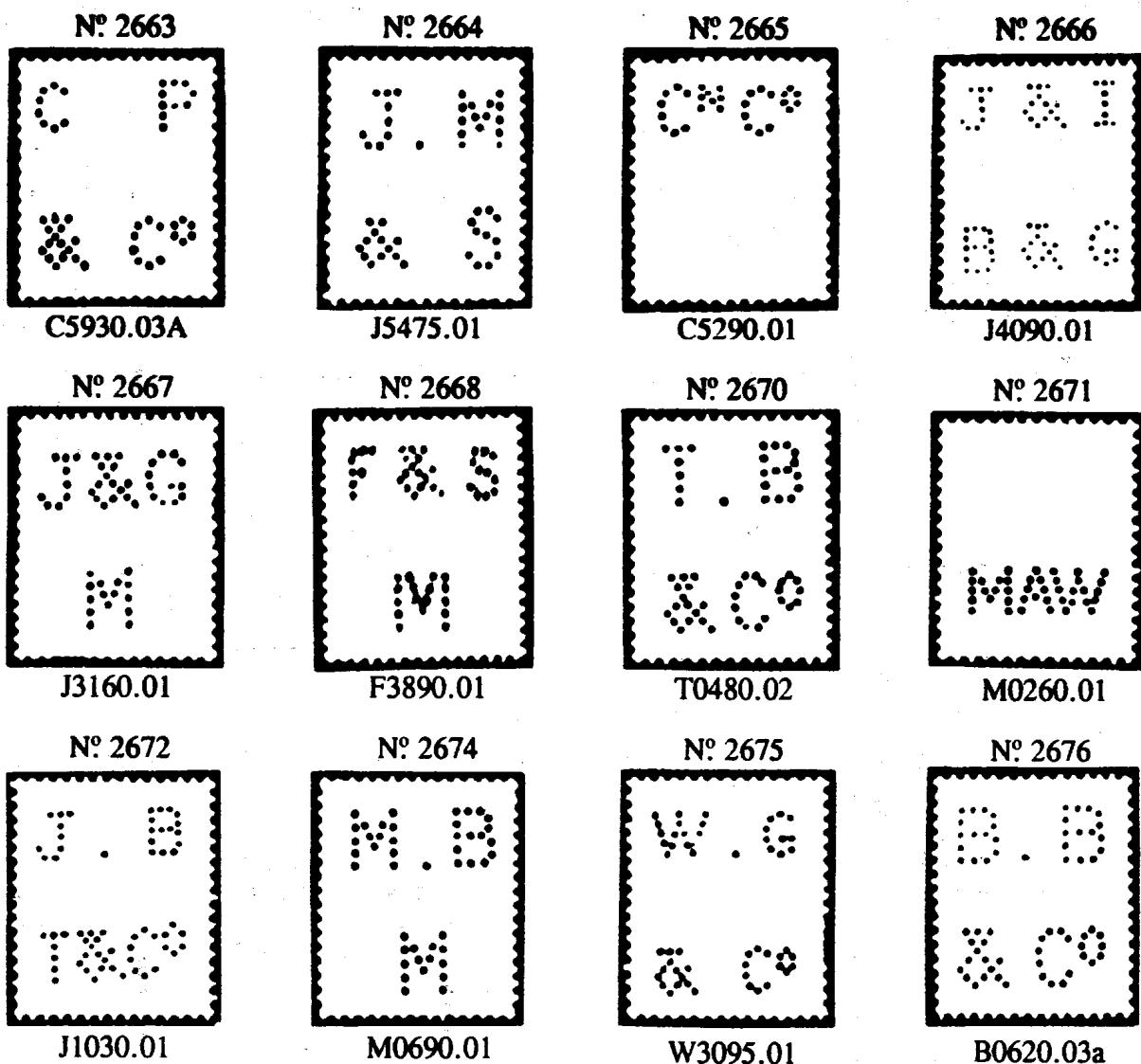


The records for 1869 show that business was picking up, with entries for KUHNER (No. 2645) in February, S.P/&C⁰ (N? 2650), L.D/S (also recorded as N° 2650) and T.J.A/463 (N? 2652) in March, and SCOTT/BROS (No. 2662) in April.

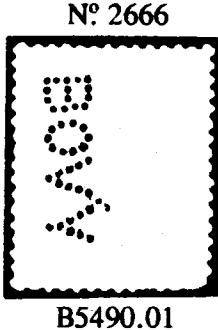


Sometime during April/May 1868 a batch of fourteen 'small initial presses' were ordered for stock, and given the numbers 2663-2676. In September 1868 a further batch of five numbered 2700-2704 with 'spiral spring' were ordered for stock, and presumably to a slightly different design

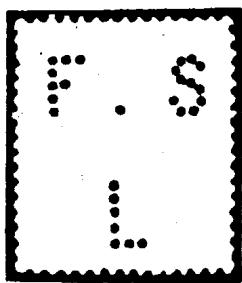
Records survive for all but two of these 'stock' presses. The first was sold in September 1869 and the last in June 1870. Although no particular pattern seems to have been adopted in their selection for sale, in most cases impressions of the finished die were taken and dated. Unfortunately, the impression for No. 2669 is missing (lost in the mists of time), and no record can be found for No. 2673.



Of interest is Press No.2666 which was originally fitted with the die J&I/B&G (J4090.01). The records show that on 28th March 1874 the die was exchanged for BOV'Y (B5490.01) - known only on one example, a Queen Victoria 1d Red (pl 164), postmarked 'D57' (Bute Docks). The machine to which J&I/B&G was transferred was not recorded.

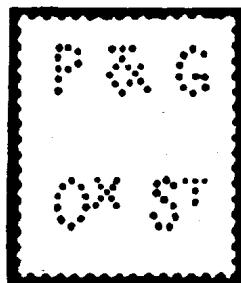


Nº 2700



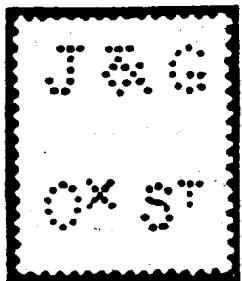
F3845.01

Nº 2701



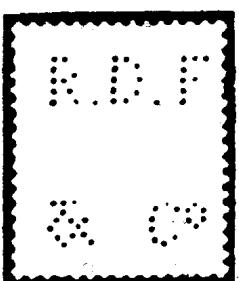
P2210.01

Nº 2702



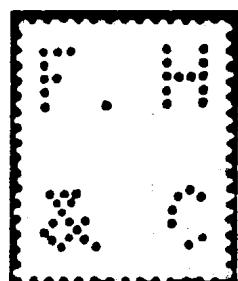
J3210.01

Nº 2703



R1425.01

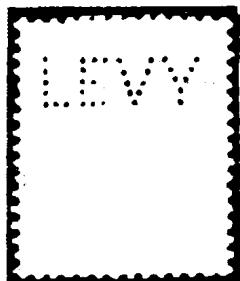
Nº 2704



F1790.01

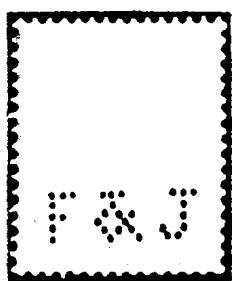
The table on the next page lists the information currently known about this small group of early GB perfins. One or two are extremely rare, such as L.D/&S,, BOV'Y, and R.D.F/&C°, and most did not survive past the Line Engraved era. Rarities, apart, probably the most interesting dies are GH/WC° because it was the 'first', and S.P/&C° because it lasted the longest.

Nº 2733



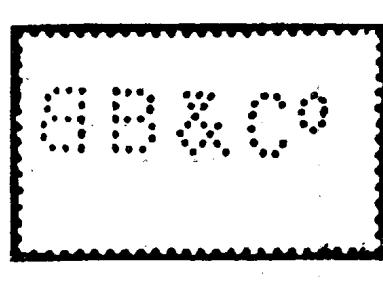
L1970.01

Nº 2734



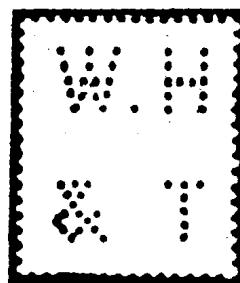
F2130.04

Nº 2741



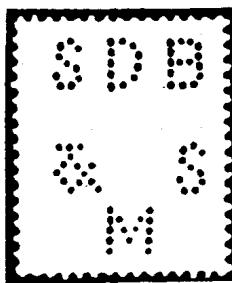
B0640.01

Nº 2757



W3920.01

Nº 2762



S2050.02

Dec 16th
Postage
the end of
1871
January 3rd

I couldn't resist finishing with the hangman 'doodle' which was penned in the Sloper ledger at the end of 1870!